

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of June 9, 2015

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, Kenneth W. Goslant, and K. David Maxwell. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Police Chief James Dziobek, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi, Norma Rooney (Falls General Store), Katrina DeMasi, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Chair Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. **SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

- IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. **Norma Rooney: Falls General Store Anniversary Block Party.** Ms. Rooney and her husband Vince own and operate the Falls General Store. She noted that July 5, 2015, will mark the one year anniversary of the reopening of the store, which had been shuttered for several years after the previous owners went out of business. Since the store's reopening has led to a revitalization and renewed sense of community in the Northfield Falls neighborhood, Ms. Rooney would like to hold a block party to mark the occasion. The tentative dates for the event are Saturday, July 18, 2015 or Sunday, July 19, 2015. If the earlier date is chosen, the following day would be used as the rain date. The festivities would include a number of items for children (i.e., face painting; "a bouncy house;" etc.) and for adults (i.e., live music and DJ; an enclosed area with beer and wine service; etc.). The event would take place from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and would necessitate partial closure of Gould Street as well as event parking at the Falls Recreation Field parking lot. Ms. Rooney and her husband have begun contacting neighbors and those whom they have spoken to have been very supportive. She added that other local vendors and non-profits are invited to set up booths during the festivities. Selectman Doney is generally supportive of the proposal but would like to have a police officer on standby if alcohol will be served at the event. That way, if someone imbibes too much and gets out of hand, he/she could be quickly escorted away. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to approve the Rooneys' proposal as submitted. They would like to be kept informed regarding the final event date and other developments. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- V. **DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. **Police Chief James Dziobek.** Chief Dziobek did not have a written report so he began by briefly summarizing some recent developments and upcoming events for the Northfield Police Department (NPD). For example, a new full-time officer, Michael Gero, has been hired. He has full police certification and eight (8) years of experience as a full-time officer. He currently lives in Hardwick but is looking to relocate to Central Vermont in the near future. Officer Gero started working for the NPD the beginning of May and is a good addition to the department. Chief Dziobek then noted that the annual Safety Day is fast approaching (06/20/15), another session of the Northfield Citizen's Police Academy will be starting soon, and Northfield's second observance of National Night Out will be held on the first Tuesday in August (08/04/15).

Chair Quinn asked how the NPD budget was for the current fiscal year (which ends at the end of this month). Chief Dziobek has not yet seen the latest numbers but believes that the NPD should be under budget by about \$10,000. Selectman Gadbois asked how the NPD has been affected by the termination of the part-time detective position. Chief Dziobek stated that the other officers have been doing their best to perform the former detective's duties when time allows.

Selectman Doney noted that in a recent email, Chief Dziobek listed the equipment provided to each NPD officer. He asked if each officer really is provided with six (6) boxes of ammunition. Chief Dziobek stated that this is the minimum amount provided annually to each NPD officer according to the terms of the current union contract. The ammunition is parceled out throughout the year and not all of it is used. Selectman Maxwell would like to see a NPD organizational chart. Chief Dziobek will provide him with one.

Selectman Goslant asked if NPD patrols the Norwich University (NU) campus. Chief Dziobek stated that NPD does not provide regular patrols but will go to the NU campus if there is a request for service. There is an informal agreement with NU that establishes the relationship between NU Security and NPD. Selectman Goslant stated that he keeps getting conflicting information regarding the amount of coverage NPD provides to the NU campus and on other matters. He sees no justification for a lot of stuff that goes on in the NPD and added that this doesn't happen in other municipal departments. Selectman Goslant stated that he is frustrated as a taxpayer and angry as a Select Board member at what he sees as a total lack of departmental accountability.

Selectman Maxwell wanted more information about the informal agreement with NU. Chief Dziobek said that several years ago, the NU administration developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that included a number of demands regarding how and when NPD officers would be allowed on campus as well as stipulations on their interactions with NU students, faculty, or staff. The draft document was presented to the Town Select Board and after some discussion it was rejected as too restrictive on police activities and not in the best interest of the Northfield community. In the absence of a written agreement, the NPD has informally agreed not to patrol the NU campus but will respond to a request for assistance. Whenever possible, the NPD will work with the Commandant of Students' Office when the department would like to interview a student as part of an investigation. However, if it is an emergency situation, the NPD officer will use his/her best judgment on whether to contact the student directly. Chief Dziobek added that there had been a perception on the NU campus that NPD officers had been treating students unfairly and this led to the MOU being drafted. Selectman Goslant said that he has spoken to NPD officers and has heard a different story.

Chair Quinn is disturbed that he has seen communications in various media outlets from Chief Dziobek or his officers stating that NPD is unable to perform certain functions due to budget restraints. He felt that the Select Board is not to blame for this since NPD itself is responsible for how its budget is spent. Selectman Goslant has been on the Select Board for over five (5) years and has become increasingly frustrated with what has been going on with the NPD. Chair Quinn is mainly upset that it has become public perception that the Select Board does not provide the NPD with sufficient resources to conduct its business. He believes that NPD has done a disservice to the community by spreading this misinformation. Selectman Maxwell asked if there is a municipal policy that prevents employees from making unauthorized media communications. Manager Schulz has been working with the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) to develop a written policy.

- b. **Finance Director Laurie Baroffio.** Ms. Baroffio distributed financial statements that covered the current fiscal year through May 31, 2015. With one month remaining in the current fiscal year, she stated that things were looking positive at this time. She added that revenues were about \$14,000 to \$20,000 more than anticipated, which is mainly due to an increase in the number of service calls, billable transports, etc. performed by the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS). The increase in call outs, etc. probably will result in NAS being about \$3000 to \$4000 over-budget due to increased fuel and personnel costs but this will be offset by the increased revenue. Ms. Baroffio added that mainly due to decreased personnel costs, many departments are projected to be under-budget. As usual, she is asking department heads to hold off on any major purchases until the next fiscal year. The only department that is significantly over-budget is Management Support and that is because of high legal bills and miscellaneous foreclosure costs. The budget for the Municipal Pool is difficult to project due to water and sewer charges as well as the various costs associated with preparing the pool for opening this coming Saturday (06/13/15). Ms. Baroffio now estimates that when all the expenses and revenues for the current fiscal year are accounted for, the Town General budget should be about \$30,000 "in the black." She added that the Town Highway budget is doing even better mainly due to reduced personnel costs and should be about \$65,000 under-budget. Chair Quinn noted that the Highway Department did some bulk buying of road materials last winter that were not used but instead were stockpiled for next winter. This will help to cut costs in the next fiscal year. Chair Quinn and the other Board members then thanked Ms. Baroffio for the positive news and her good work.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **May 26, 2015 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #24-15.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #24-15 in the amount of \$783,954.82. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #25-15A.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve Warrant #24-15A in the amount of \$105,556.54. Chair Quinn noted that this is a payment for the Fairground Road Bridge Replacement project. FEMA will be reimbursing Northfield for ninety percent (90%) of the project cost. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through May 24, 2015.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$68,311.62. Chair Quinn asked why the "Daytime Transfers" expense for the Northfield Ambulance Service was so high for this pay period. Manager Schulz was unsure and will look into this. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Proposed FY 2015/2016 Water, Sewer, and Electric Budgets.** Manager Schulz states that the two (2) Utility Commissions (Water & Wastewater and Electric) have been meeting jointly the past couple months to review the proposed utility budgets. Since the full Select Board just received the proposed budgets, he would like to provide a general overview tonight and schedule Board approval for the next regular meeting (06/23/15). At this time, we do not anticipate any increases in the water, sewer, or electric rates charged to the customer.

Selectman Gadbois asked if the bank notes for the north, west, and south phases of the Water Project are now being paid off. Ms. Baroffio confirmed that the notes for these completed phases of the overall Water Project are due for payment, with the first payment for the south phase coming this August. There is a two (2) year period after the phase completion before payment needs to be paid, so it will be a couple years before payments need to be made for the current projects on Central Street and King Street.

Selectman Goslant is a Utility Commission member and he feels very positive about the budgets that are being presented for Select Board approval. Selectman Gadbois asked if there was any thought to raising the water rates to cover the costs of the current projects. Chair Quinn also is concerned about the potential loss of revenue should Chouinard Textiles relocate to another community. Ms. Baroffio noted that both these concerns would not affect the Water Department for a couple years so she would not recommend raising rates to cover possible scenarios. She added that there had been the possibility of a water rate increase last year but that was averted when there was an unexpected budget surplus.

Selectman Gadbois asked about a long-term bond in the Sewer Department budget. Ms. Baroffio stated that this was the thirty (30) year bank note that paid for the construction of the current Wastewater Treatment Facility in 2002. This note will be paid off in fiscal year 2034/2035.

Regarding the Electric Department budget, Manager Schulz stated that the department has decent reserves and the Utility Commission may be looking at possible system upgrades to make use of these funds. As indicated earlier, there are no plans to raise the electric rates at this time. Selectman Goslant noted that the power purchase issue is a very complex one and Northfield is very fortunate to have Manager Schulz and Utility Commissioner Stephen Fitzhugh handling this so well. He believes that the Northfield Electric Department's financial situation has improved dramatically over the past ten (10) years.

- b. **Transfer Station Agreement with Earth Waste Systems.** Manager Schulz stated that the current agreement with Earth Waste Systems to operate the transfer station will expire at the end of this month. Bid proposals were solicited for a new agreement and Earth Waste Systems submitted the only proposal. As authorized by the Select Board, Manager Schulz has been drafting a new agreement with them. This agreement is largely based on the current one but some minor changes have been made. For example, the new agreement would be for one year rather than three (3) because Manager Schulz would like to evaluate how well Earth Waste Systems will handle the new recycling laws coming into effect, how it works with Northfield's new solid waste management district (Mountain Alliance), etc. Chair Quinn would like the agreement to specify that participation in any household hazardous waste collections at the transfer station would be limited to Northfield residents. Manager Schulz will make this change. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve and authorize Manager Schulz to execute the agreement with Earth Waste Systems to operate the Northfield Transfer Station. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Bond Anticipation Note (FY 2012 RSMS Program).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Note in the amount of \$70,000 at 1.14% interest; to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. Manager Schulz added that this was an old loan being refinanced at a lower interest rate. Selectman Goslant believes that more money should be set aside for the RSMS (Road Surface Management System) program due to the poor condition of several of the backroads. Should the Select Board decide to do this during the next budget sessions, Chair Quinn would prefer that the additional funds be put in the Highway Department's operating budget rather than borrow more money. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Current Expense Note (Sewer Building Roof).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve and sign the Current Expense Note in the amount of \$20,562 at 1.14% interest; to approve and sign the Current Expense Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. **Capital Expense Note (Vehicle Lift).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve and sign the Capital Expense Note in the amount of \$14,013 at 1.14% interest; to approve and sign the Capital Expense Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- f. **Current Expense Note (Central Street Culvert).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve and sign the Current Expense Note in the amount of \$8,620 at 1.14% interest; to approve and sign the Current Expense Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- g. Appointment of Interim Zoning Administrator.** Zoning Administrator Michele Braun informed the Select Board a couple months ago that she would be resigning her position as of this month. She will be leaving at the end of this week. Chair Quinn stated that it was the consensus of the Select Board to have Manager Schulz serve in the position on an interim basis in order to fully assess the department and its needs. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to appoint Manager Schulz as the Interim Zoning Administrator. Selectman Gadbois is concerned that given his other responsibilities, Manager Schulz will not have enough time to give this position adequate attention. Manager Schulz does not think that it will take more than a few weeks for a proper analysis of the situation. Selectman Maxwell asked if the Planning Commission has been made aware of this intention. Manager Schulz said that the Planning Commission members were informed some time ago. They did have some concerns about the issue of separation of powers but this should not become a problem in the short term. Manager Schulz should have his recommendation ready for the Select Board by the first regular meeting in August (08/11/15). Chair Quinn wants to sure that the community isn't given the false impression that the Select Board does not consider this to be an important position. The Board merely wants to properly evaluate the situation to see what would work best for Northfield. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- h. Appointment to Fill Planning Commission Vacancy.** Planning Commissioner Steven Jeffery has submitted his resignation that would be effective following the next Planning Commission meeting (06/15/15). Former Planning Commissioner Stephen Fitzhugh has submitted a letter of interest to fill this seat once it becomes vacant. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to appoint Stephen Fitzhugh to the Planning Commission. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- i. Northfield's Safety Day.** Chair Quinn noted that the 22nd Annual Northfield Safety Day will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2015, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Northfield Fire Station (128 Wall Street). As usual, there will be free refreshments, exhibits, demonstrations, etc. Free smoke detectors and children's bike helmets will be distributed while supplies last. For the second year in a row, the American Red Cross will conduct a blood drive.
- j. Public Hearing (VCDP Grant Application).** The Town of Northfield is considering making an Implementation Grant application under the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP). The proposal is to apply for \$1,000,000 in VCDP funds to facilitate the proposed expansion of Cabot Hosiery Mills and related construction involving new parking areas, utility relocation, etc. A public hearing will be held at 7:00 p.m. prior to the next regular meeting (06/23/15) in order to receive public comment on this possible application.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. FEMA Buyout Project Status.** Selectman Maxwell asked about the status of the last standing FEMA buyout property located at 449 Water Street. Manager Schulz stated that the Northfield Fire Department has scheduled fire training on the structure this coming Sunday (06/14/15). Whatever remains will be razed by a private contractor soon thereafter.
- b. Recreation Committee Update.** Selectman Goslant reported that the Recreation Committee is looking to create a recreation path that connects Memorial Park and the Falls Park. In addition, shelters are being put up by local Boys Scouts as part of an Eagle Scout project. He added that Eagle Scout candidate Wil Hallstrom did a great job of installing the memorial plaque at the park. Selectman Goslant believes that thanks to the support of the current Recreation Committee, Northfield's recreational opportunities are being handled in a responsible manner.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT. Manager Schulz had nothing to add to his written report.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. Kathleen Lott: Fairground Road Bridge.** Ms. Lott asked if the new bridge has been completed. Manager Schulz confirmed that the new bridge was opened last week and the temporary bridge removed. Ms. Lott asked if school buses would cross the new bridge. Manager Schulz stated that this decision is up to the bus company. There is no reason why they shouldn't, but there also was no reason why the buses could not go across the temporary bridge that met all requirements.

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular Select Board meeting.